

RETAIL PRICES - MARCH QUARTER, 1949.

All Items - "C" Series.

Index numbers (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1000) of retail prices of all items ("C" Series) for the March quarter, 1949, with figures for December quarter, 1948, for comparison (in brackets), were:- Brisbane, 1295 (1291); Toowoomba, 1304 (1292); Rockhampton, 1307 (1290); Townsville, 1356 (1335); Bundaberg, 1287 (1276); and Warwick, 1294 (1282).

The index for Brisbane rose by only 4 points, or 0.3 per cent., in the March quarter, which was the smallest rise since an increase of 0.2 per cent. in the June quarter of 1947. On that occasion the upward trend of prices was retarded by a reduction in the price of meat and some delayed effects of a reduction of sales tax on clothing in the previous quarter. In the latest quarter the smallness of the increase was due to a decrease in clothing prices, owing to the reduction of retailers' profit margins by the Prices Commissioner, and to an unusually small rise in food prices. The September quarter of 1947 showed an increase of 1.0 per cent., and all subsequent quarters except the latest showed increases of 2 per cent. or more. Food and groceries in Brisbane now cost 1½ times as much as before the war, clothing and footwear over twice as much, and miscellaneous items 1⅓ times as much (see table at foot of this page).

In the other five cities of Queensland from which data are obtained, the March quarter rise in the "C" Series index was much greater than in Brisbane, being 0.9 per cent. in Toowoomba, Bundaberg, and Warwick, 1.3 per cent. in Rockhampton, and 1.6 per cent. in Townsville. In all these cities, particularly Bundaberg, Rockhampton, and Warwick, the cut in clothing margins had been less effective at the date of collection (15th February) than in Brisbane. Moreover, the rises in food prices in these cities during the quarter were greater than in Brisbane, while in Rockhampton and Townsville there were appreciable increases in the prices of gas and firewood.

The indexes show the following percentage increases when compared with those for the periods shown.

Retail Price Index, "C" Series, Percentage Increases, March Quarter, 1949.

City.		From Year Ended June, 1939.	From March Quarter, 1948.	From December Quarter, 1948.
		%	%	%
Brisbane ..	..	50.1	8.5	0.3
Toowoomba ..	..	53.2	8.8	0.9
Rockhampton ..	..	61.8	9.7	1.3
Townsville ..	..	48.7	10.2	1.6
Bundaberg ..	..	53.0	10.5	0.9
Warwick ..	..	57.4	9.2	0.9

Food and groceries, clothing and footwear, and the miscellaneous group of items comprising household drapery and hardware, fuel, light, fares, etc., have shown the following percentage changes during the last quarter and since 1938-39.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases^a, March Quarter, 1949.

City.	Food and Groceries.		Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Dec. Quarter, 1948.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Dec. Quarter, 1948.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Dec. Quarter, 1948.
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane	52.3	1.9	115.4	-1.7	32.0	0.5
Toowoomba	63.9	3.5	110.0	-1.3	30.9	0.4
Rockhampton	51.1	2.9	110.9	-0.7	37.4	2.4
Townsville	49.4	4.4	112.4	-1.3	35.6	2.2
Bundaberg	51.3	2.6	116.0	-0.2	30.1	0.1
Warwick	56.7	2.8	117.9	-0.7	32.0	0.1

^a Minus (-) indicates decrease.

Food and Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses).

The principal increases in food prices in Brisbane were in potatoes, eggs, and onions. There were also increases in the prices of beef and pork. Mutton, on the other hand, showed a small fall in price.

In the other cities, there were similar rises in the prices of these commodities, but in Toowoomba and Townsville the combined food and grocery price index rose more than in the other cities. In both of these cities, the rises for potatoes and eggs were greater than in Brisbane, while in Toowoomba there were increased prices for canned fruit, and in Townsville an increase in the price of pork.

The rent index increased in Warwick by 0.7 per cent., but it remained stationary in the other five cities.

Clothing, Footwear, and Miscellaneous Items.

Following a number of large increases, clothing and footwear prices in Brisbane showed the first decrease since March quarter, 1947, when the decrease was 1.5 per cent. (following a reduction of sales tax on most clothing items), compared with a decrease of 1.7 per cent. in the March quarter, 1949. The decrease in the latest quarter was due to the policy of the Prices Commissioner of reducing retailers' margins on most clothing items. In the other cities, the reduction in clothing prices had not been as great as in Brisbane up to the date of collection of March quarter prices.

The miscellaneous items index showed only a small increase during the quarter (0.5 per cent. in Brisbane), and is now 32.0 per cent. above its pre-war level. In Rockhampton and Townsville the index rose during the quarter by over 2 per cent., due principally to increased gas prices in Rockhampton, and to higher gas and (slightly less important) firewood prices in Townsville.

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts, for the various Queensland cities, required in March quarter, 1949, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Items.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Toowoomba ..	1	0	2	1	0	6	1	0	4		19	6
Rockhampton ..	1	0	2	1	0	9		18	3		19	11
Townsville ..	1	0	11	1	1	11	1	0	0	1	0	0
Bundaberg ..		19	11	1	0	11		15	10	1	0	3
Warwick ..	1	0	0	1	0	4		17	7	1	0	2

During the quarter, price rises were greater in the provincial cities than in Brisbane. As a result, while only Townsville showed higher average prices than Brisbane in the December quarter of 1948, in the March quarter of 1949 three of the provincial cities had higher prices than Brisbane. Only in Bundaberg were prices lower than in Brisbane, and there the buyer saved only 1d. on the £1 spent in Brisbane on average retail purchases. In Townsville 11d. more was required to purchase goods which would have cost £1 in Brisbane, compared with 8d. more in the December quarter of 1948.

Basic Wage Rates in State Capital Cities.

The following table shows, for the March quarter of 1949, the retail price index number ("C" Series) for each of the six capital cities and the prevailing basic wage rates for males prescribed by Commonwealth and State industrial tribunals respectively. The fourth column shows the amounts which would have been required in Brisbane to provide a standard of living equivalent to that provided by each State basic wage in its own capital city. The differences between these amounts and the State basic wage for Brisbane, which are given in the last column, show the margin of advantage in real purchasing power provided by the Queensland basic wage over each of the other State basic wages, according to price levels and wages prevailing at the middle of February, 1949.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates - March Quarter, 1949.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index ("C" Series) 1st Quarter, 1949.	Commonwealth Court Basic Wage for Males at 15.2.49.	State Court Basic Wage for Males at 15.2.49.	Equivalent at Brisbane Prices of Each State Basic Wage.	Margin of Purchasing Power in Favour of Brisbane State Basic Wage.
		£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	s. d.
Brisbane ..	1295	5 18 0	6 2 0	6 2 0	-
Sydney ..	1391	6 4 0	6 4 0	5 15 5	6 7
Melbourne ..	1363	6 3 0	6 3 0	5 16 10	5 2
Adelaide ..	1347	5 19 0	5 17 0	5 12 6	9 6
Perth ..	1338	5 13 0	6 4 9	6 0 9	1 3
Hobart ..	1379	6 1 0	6 1 0	5 13 8	8 4

Following the publication of the index numbers shown in the above table, the basic wage of the Commonwealth Court was automatically adjusted from 1st May, 1949. The new rates and the amounts of the adjustments are shown below, together with the latest basic wage rates for males and females declared by the various State industrial authorities, and the dates from which they operated.

Basic Wage Rates - June Quarter, 1949.

Capital City.	Commonwealth Basic Wage.		State Basic Wage.		
	Amount. ^a	Increase on Previous Quarter.	Males.	Females.	Date of Operation.
	£ s. d.	s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	
Brisbane ..	5 19 0	1 0	6 3 0	3 15 6	2.5.49
Sydney ..	6 7 0	3 0	6 7 0	3 8 6	1.5.49
Melbourne ..	6 5 0	2 0	(6 5 0)	3 7 6	(1.5.49) ^b
Adelaide ..	6 1 0	2 0	6 5 0	3 8 6	19.5.49
Perth ..	6 0 0	2 0	6 7 1	3 8 8	2.5.49
Hobart ..	6 4 0	3 0	(6 4 0)	(3 7 0)	(1.5.49) ^b

^a Rate for males. The female rate is generally 54 per cent. of the male rate.

^b No State wage declared, but rates shown are those of Commonwealth Court which are followed to a large extent.

S. E. SOLOMON.

Government Statistician.

Brisbane.

6th May, 1949.

Table No. 1 -- The "All Items" Retail Prices Index - "C" Series.
(Base = 1000 in 1923-1927 in Six State Capitals.)

City.	Year Ended Decr., 1928.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended March, 1949.	Quarters Ended --				
				March, 1948.	June, 1948.	Sept., 1948.	Decr., 1948.	March, 1949.
Brisbane ..	917	863	1266	1193	1227	1251	1291	1295
Toowoomba ..	906	851	1272	1199	1232	1260	1292	1304
Rockhampton ..	903	861	1270	1191	1225	1259	1290	1307
Townsville ..	1023	912	1314	1230	1263	1300	1335	1356
Bundaberg ..	b	841	1252	1165	1203	1241	1276	1287
Weighted Average Five Towns ^a	915	864	1270	1195	1229	1256	1294	1300
Warwick ..	914	822	1261	1185	1220	1249	1282	1294

^aPrior to 1937 the five towns in the weighted averages included Charters Towers and Warwick which have now been replaced by Townsville and Bundaberg.

^bPrices for Bundaberg were not collected prior to September quarter, 1936.

Table No. 2 - Food, Groceries, and Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses) Index - "B" Series.
(Base = 1000 in 1923-1927 in Six State Capitals.)

City.	Year Ended Decr., 1928.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended March, 1949.	Quarters Ended -				
				March, 1948.	June, 1948.	Sept., 1948.	Decr., 1948.	March, 1949.
Brisbane ..	901	852	1095	1039	1058	1074	1116	1130
Toowoomba ..	833	821	1111	1055	1073	1092	1126	1153
Rockhampton ..	858	837	1089	1025	1047	1072	1107	1129
Townsville ..	1047	916	1154	1089	1109	1133	1169	1205
Bundaberg ..	b	799	1057	992	1012	1040	1077	1098
Weighted Average Five Towns ^a	892	851	1098	1041	1060	1078	1118	1136
Warwick ..	841	768	1063	1004	1023	1047	1080	1103

^aPrior to 1937 the five towns in the weighted averages included Charters Towers and Warwick which have now been replaced by Townsville and Bundaberg.

^bPrices for Bundaberg were not collected prior to September quarter, 1936.

Table No. 3 - Average Retail Prices of Food and Groceries, Brisbane.

Commodity and Unit of Quantity.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Month of -		Commodity and Unit of Quantity.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Month of -	
		Decr., 1948.	March, 1949.			Decr., 1948.	March, 1949.
	d.	d.	d.		d.	d.	d.
Bread .. 2 lb.	5.33	7.50	7.50	Eggs .. 1 doz.	19.69	30.00	36.00
Flour .. 2 lb.	3.73	5.41	5.36	Milk .. 1 qt.	6.00	8.55	8.55
Tea .. 1 lb.	26.99	33.00	33.00	Beef -			
Sugar .. 1 lb.	3.98	4.46	4.46	Sirloin Roast 1 lb.	8.73	17.00	17.00
Sago .. 1 lb.	3.00	15.45	14.94	Steak, Rump 1 lb.	11.34	21.50	21.55
Jam, Plum 1½ lb.	8.02	15.64	15.55	Steak, Chuck 1 lb.	5.83	10.50	10.55
Oats, Flaked 1 lb.	3.57	4.60	4.60	Rolled			
Raisins 1 lb.	10.57	16.25	16.33	Brisket 1 lb.	5.48	10.50	10.50
Potatoes 7 lb.	14.88	21.00	24.05	Mutton -			
Onions .. 1 lb.	2.93	2.64	3.68	Leg .. 1 lb.	7.75	12.20	12.15
Soap .. 1 lb.	6.20	9.91	9.91	Loin Chops 1 lb.	7.78	11.44	12.55
Butter .. 1 lb.	19.00	25.91	25.91	Pork -			
Cheese .. 1 lb.	13.28	17.50	17.55	Leg .. 1 lb.	11.40	22.80	23.20
				Chops 1 lb.	11.48	23.45	23.65